



THE DARK GETHSEMANE HOUR

Matthew 26:36-40—November 20
The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.—V. 14

AFTER the Master and his disciples, as Jews, had celebrated the Passover Supper and after he had subsequently instituted the Memorial of his death with the bread and the cup, and after Judas had gone out to betray him, Jesus and the remaining eleven left the upper room in Jerusalem, crossed the city to the gate and thence crossed the Valley Kedron and ascended the sloping side of Mt. Olivet toward the Garden of Gethsemane. The word Gethsemane signifies oil-press. Tradition has it that this Garden belonged to the family of which the Apostles John and James were members, and that for this reason the Lord and his disciples were privileged to feel themselves at home there. St. Mark, the writer of one of the Gospels, but not one of the Apostles, is credited with having been a member of the same family. One of the accounts of the arrest of the Master tells that amongst those who followed after him was a young man wrapped with a sheet and who fled naked when some members of the band attempted to lay hold of him. That young man, tradition says, years afterwards was known as St. Mark.

The Journey to Gethsemane

This was the most memorable night of the Master's experience. He knew perfectly the meaning of every feature of the Passover. He knew that he was the Lamb of God, antitypically, whose death was to be accomplished on the following day by crucifixion. Yet his thoughts were for his dear disciples. He must give them final words of encouragement and instruction. And so he did. Three chapters of St. John's Gospel record the incidents of the intervening time between the leaving of the upper room and the arriving at Gethsemane, the place of the oil-press. "And Judas also, who betrayed him, knew the place, for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples" (John viii. 2). In St. John xiv the Master told his disciples about the place he would go to prepare for them, but that he would send the Spirit of Truth to be their Comforter and it would show them things to come. In the fifteenth chapter he gave them the parable of the Vine and the Branches and assured them that no longer should they be servants, but friends. "For all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." In the sixteenth chapter he explained to them that persecutions must be expected, if they would share his sufferings and be prepared to share his glory.

A little while and they would not see him; then again a little while and they would see him. The entire period of his absence, from the Divine standpoint, as compared to eternity, would be but a little while. Then, by virtue of the resurrection "change," they would see him, because made like him. "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." "These things I have given unto you that in me ye might have peace." In the 37th chapter is recorded his wonderful

His disciples and followers loved him dearly. Still he was alone, because he alone had been begotten of the holy Spirit. His followers could not feel so blessed nor be spirit-begotten until after his sacrifice had been finished nor until he would appear in the presence of God for them to apply his merit imputedly to them, to permit them to join with him sacrificially in the sufferings of this present time, that they might share with him also in the glories to follow.

St. Peter, referring to the foregoing experience of our Lord, declares that he offered up strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard in respect to that which he feared. Why did he fear? Do not all humanity face death, and some of them with great courage and some with bravado? Ah, there is a vast difference between the Master's standpoint and ours as respects death. We were born dying. We never knew perfect life. We have always known that there is no escape from death. It



EVERYBODY IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE OFFERED UP STRONG CRYING AND TEARS UNTO HIM THAT WAS ABLE TO SAVE HIM OUT OF DEATH.

COULD YE NOT WATCH WITH ME ONE HOUR? WATCH AND PRAY, LEAST YE ENTER INTO TEMPTATION.

was different with him. His experiences on the spirit plane before coming into the world were all in association with life, perfection of life. "In him was life"—uncontaminated, because he was holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners; his life came not from Adam.

He knew that in his perfection he had a right to life, if he would live in perfect accordance with the Divine requirements. But he knew also that by special Covenant with God, "a Covenant by sacrifice," he had agreed to the surrender of all his earthly rights and to allow his life to be taken from him. The Father had promised him a great reward of glory, honor and immortality through resurrection from the dead, but this was dependent upon his absolute obedience in every particular—in word, in thought, in deed. The question was, Had he been absolutely loyal to God in every particular? If not death would mean to him an eternal extinction of being, not only the loss of heavenly glory promised as a reward, but the loss of everything. Can we wonder that he did not understand? The hour seemed so dark, and he said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful." He knew that he was to die. He knew that death was necessary. But here, now, looming up before him on the morrow was a shameful execution as a blasphemer, as a criminal, as a violator of Divine law. Could it be possible that in anything, even slightly, he had taken to himself the honor due to the Father? Could it be possible that in any degree he had held back, even in his mind, from full obedience to the Father's will? Did this crucifixion as a criminal possibly mean the loss of Divine favor? Was it necessary that he should die thus? Might not this cup of ignominy pass? So he prayed in a great agony. And although the older Greek manuscripts do not contain the statement that he sweat great drops of blood, medical science tells us that such an experience would not have been at all impossible in a nervous, strained, mental agony. But we note the beautiful simplicity of the statement with which his prayer concluded—"Nevertheless, my Father, not my will, but thy will, be done."

How childlike and beautiful the faith and trust, even amidst strenuous agitation! St. Paul says that he was heard in the thing which he feared. How? God's answer came by angelic hands. An angel appeared and ministered to him—ministered to his necessity. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Hebrews i. 14). We are not informed in what words this heavenly ministry was expressed to the Master in his lowliness and sorrow, but we do know that it must have been with full assurance of the Heavenly Father's favor and sympathy and love. He was heard in respect to the things which he feared. He received the assurance that he was well-pleasing to the Father; that he had been faithful to his Covenant, and that he would have the resurrection promised.

"Behold the Lamb of God"

From that moment onward the Master was the calmest of all who had any association with the great events of that night and the following day. Officers, servants, Sanhedrin, priests, Herod and his men of war, Pilate and his soldiers, and the shouting rabble—all were excited, all were distressed. Jesus only was calm. This was because he had the Father's assurance that all was well between them. As this blessed assurance gave the Master courage, so his followers since have found that, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If we have the peace of God ruling in our hearts, it is beyond all human comprehension.

Judas the Ungrateful Apostate

The world is full of sadly disappointing characters. In many things we all fail. Selfishness, meanness, perversity, pride, etc., mark the human family most woefully. But withal can anyone find anything more reprehensible than the ingrate who would betray his best friend?

The world is of one opinion respecting such characters as that of Judas. And although he is a noted example he is by no means an exception; there are many. Some of them live today. But whoever can see the meanness of such a disposition with a reasonably good focus will surely be saved from manifesting such a character, however mean might be his disposition. The man who could sell his Master for thirty pieces of silver is justly in contempt with all humanity. Nor was it merely the thirty pieces that influenced the ingrate. Rather it was pride. He had thought to be associated with the Master in an earthly throne. He had set his faith upon this expectation. Now that same Master explained more fully that the throne was not yet in sight; that it belongs to an age to follow this, and was to be given only to those who should prove themselves loyal and faithful unto death. In the mind of Judas the matter took not the wisest and best way. Holding the Great Teacher in contempt, the deceived one probably intended that the delivery should be merely a temporary one—a lesson to the Master not to talk that way, not to carry matters too far—an incentive to him, compelling him to exert his power for the resistance of those who sought his life and thus, in exalting himself, make good to his disciples the share in the Kingdom which he had promised or, failing of this, to wreck the entire project. Alas, the love of money, the love of power puff up and make delirious some who become intoxicated with ambition. How necessary that all the Lord's followers remember the message, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter v. 6).

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Flowers for the Living.

Once while assisting in the last sad rites that so often fall on us to perform here on earth, for some dear and precious loved one stricken by the hand of death we were particularly impressed as we beheld the casket containing the still, silent form so profusely covered with flowers that it seemed

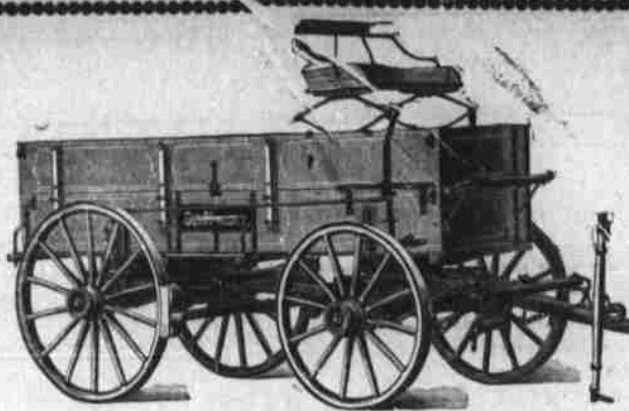
"I would be bliss to there repose."

But we had known the pathway that silent form had trod. Few flowers bloomed beside it, but little sunlight ever crossed it. Tired and weary, few proffered help, sad and discouraged few spoke words of cheer. Thorns by the way, there seemed none to remove them; often cast down there seemed none near to lift up. A heart starving for a loving word, a soul bewildered for lack of a tender hand to guide. But all is over now; the pangs the regrets, the cares, the sorrows can hamper that form no longer, neither can any tender, loving administration you may now bestow take one pang, one regret, pluck one thorn or emit one ray of sunshine on the life already over, or add one jot to the bliss of the soul in its new estate. That day most beautiful flowers were proffered by those whose lips never uttered one word of cheer to the departed, nor hands never held out to help, to remove the thorn, to smooth way and make at least one pleasant little oasis on life's desert.

Have we friends? We trust we have. Then we pray them save not all the flowers for my burial, but sprinkle a few along my pathway now—just a few. We can appreciate them just now. How refreshing—how they fill my poor heart with joy just to know someone thinks of us—cares for us, is even solicitous for our welfare. Oh, how it brightens life, lightens its burdens; the consolation even softens a dying pillow, might we not say adds bliss to the departed spirit. Yes, strew our coffin with flowers, but oh, grant us a few by the way—just a few bestowed against the day of our burial.

Number One.

"I always take care of 'Number One,'" said one of a troop of boys at the end of a bridge, some wanting to go one way and some another. "That's you, out and out," cried one of his companions. "You don't think or care about any one but yourself, you ought to be called 'Number One.'" "If I did not take care of 'Number One, who would, I should like to know?" cried he. True, Number One was right. He ought to take care of himself—good



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care. "But does not that smack a little of selfishness?" the boys ask. "Number One thinks of nobody but himself."

Nobody but himself! that certainly is selfish, and therefore wrong. Yet Number One is committed to our own care. What sort of care is the all-important question.

Take care of his habits. Make Number One industrious, persevering, self-denying and frugal. Give him plenty of good, healthy work to do, teach him how best to do it, and keep him from lounging and all idle company.

Take care of the lips of Number One. Let truth dwell on them. Put a bridle in his mouth that no angry, backbiting tale shall come from it. Let no profane or impure word escape. Let the law of kindness rule his tongue and all his conversation be such as becomes a child of God.

Take care of the affections and feelings of Number One. Teach him to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself; to care for others, and share with others; to be lowly in mind, forgiving, gentle, sympathizing, willing to bear and forbear, easily entreated, doing good to all as he has opportunity.

This is the care to take of Number One, and a rich blessing will he prove to his home, and neighborhood, and himself! Boys! you all have Number One to take care of; and a responsible charge it is.

Definition of Home.

Home—A small part of the world which "all the world" could not buy.

Home—the anteroom of heaven. It should be anti-trust, anti-monopoly, anti-license and anti all other forms of evil.

The golden setting, in which the brightest jewel is "mother."

Home is the blossom, of which heaven is the fruit.

The only spot on earth where the faults and failings are hidden under the mantle of charity.

The place where the great are sometimes small and the small often great.

The father's kingdom the children's paradise, the mother's world.

The jewel casket containing the most precious of all jewels—domestic happiness.

Where you are treated best and you grumble most.

Home is the central telegraph office of human love, into which run innumerable wires of affection, many of which, though extending thousands of miles, are never disconnected from the one great terminus.

The center of our affections, around which our hearts best wishes twine.

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We need to remember that success in life is not success in material life alone but in the social and religious as well. That a man is not a practical man who is a merchant, a farmer, a teacher, a neighbor, a friend, a son, perhaps a brother, a husband, a father—and most important of all, a little child in the garden of a Heavenly King.

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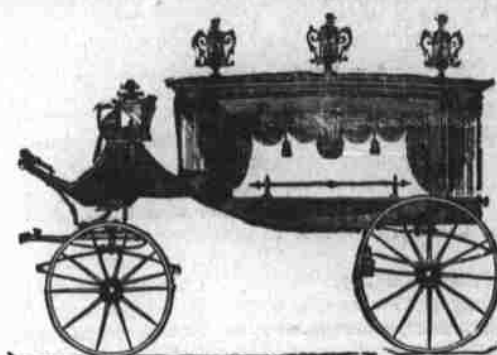
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